

Message Text

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46

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SAM-01 DHA-02 ORM-02

SSM-03 IO-13 OC-06 CCO-00 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 AID-05

SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 MCT-01 OMB-01 SCS-03

SCA-01 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-07 DOTE-00 FAA-00 USSS-00

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INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 114

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

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COMSIXTHFLT

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FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 7727

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

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SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION SEPTEMBER 28

REF: BEIRUT 7688

1. SUMMARY. MAJOR BATTLE IN THE METN. TRIPOLI DEFENDERS HARD PRESSED. SARKIS CONTINUES MEET POLITICAL FIGURES, INCLUDING CHAMOUN WHO HAS GIVEN HINT OF MODERATING HIS POSITION ON PALESTINIAN RETREAT FROM MOUNTAINS. LEFTIST RADIO SAYS FRENCH PEACE-KEEPING FORCE WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE IF AL APPROVED, BUT HASAN SABRI KHOLI SAYS HE OPPOSES USE OF NON-ARAB FORCE. KATAEB CONGRESS PLANNED. REPORTED ISRAELI ATTACK ON JUNBLATT WHILE ENROUTE TO CAIRO FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH FAHMI AND SADAT. KHOLI PESSIMISTIC ON POSSIBILITIES REOPENING AIRPORT SOON. FRENCH MEDICINES ARRIVE IN JOUNIEH. END SUMMARY.

2. GROUND SITUATION: BATTLE IN THE MOUNTAINS. SEPT 27 RELATIVELY CALM BUT SEP 28 BRINGS MAJOR BATTLE IN THE METN. WE UNDERSTAND ALL RIGHTIST FORCES HAVE BEEN ON ALERT SINCE LATE SEP 27 AND FATAH UNITS PUT ON EXTREME ALERT EARLY SEP 28. AL MOHARRIR REPORTS HEAVY SYRIAN REINFORCEMENTS, INCLUDING 30 TANKS AND ARMORED VEHICLES AT SOFAR AND ZAHLE AT "GATES OF THE METN" AND SAYS RIGHTISTS HAVE REINFORCED THEIR POSITIONS IN THE HIGH METN. AMERICAN EMBASSY VEHICLE ENROUTE DAMASCUS TURNED BACK AT SOFAR MORNING SEP 28 BY SYRIAN TROOPS. HEAVY SHELLING REPORTED IN AREA.

3. GROUND SITUATION ELSEWHERE. RELATIVE CALM IN BEIRUT SEP 27 FOLLOWED BY RENEWED VIOLENCE LATE IN DAY, INCLUDING HEAVY SHELLING ALONG CONFRONTATION LINE AND REPORTS OF KIDNAPINGS. HEAVY FIGHTING REPORTED IN COMMERCIAL DISTRICT, AND IN SUBURBS AT GALERIE SEMAAN, HADETH/LAYLAKI AND CHIYAH/AIN EL-RUMMANEH, WHERE 32 REPORTED KILLED. IN NORTH, WE UNDERSTAND DEFENDERS OF TRIPOLI EXTREMELY HARD PRESSED AND SECTIONS OF CITY PREVIOUSLY UNTOUCHED NOW BEING BOMBARDED. FIGHTING REPORTED ON TRIPOLI OUTSKIRTS AND NEAR ZGHORTA.

4. SARKIS CONTINUES MEETINGS. CHAMOUN SAID HE AND
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SARKIS DISCUSSED CEASE-FIRE POSSIBILITIES AND PALESTINIAN RETREAT FROM MOUNTAINS DURING SEP 27 MEETING. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR CONJECTURES CHAMOUN MAY HAVE MODIFIED POSITION. FOR FIRST TIME, HE DID NOT CITE PALESTINIAN RETREAT FROM MOUNTAINS AS PRECONDITION TO CEASE-FIRE, SAYING INSTEAD PALESTINIAN PROPOSITION OF STEP-BY-STEP RETREAT, EVEN THOUGH "INSUFFICIENT" COULD BE BASIS FOR DISCUSSION. HE SAID 15 DAYS

SHOULD BE ENOUGH TIME FOR PALESTINIAN WITHDRAWALS. SARKIS ALSO MET WITH DEPUTY KAZEN EL-KHALIL. BOTH CHAMOUN AND KHALIL TOLD JOURNALISTS SARKIS PLACING IMMEDIATE EMPHASIS ON CEASE-FIRE AND LEBANESE/LEBANESE DIALOGUE RATHER THAN CABINET FORMATION, WHICH MAY BE DELAYED FOR SOME TIME. AL MOHARRIR SAYS KHALIL PREDICTED DECISIVE MILITARY ACTION IF DIALOGUE FAILS. KHALIL SAID SARKIS PLAN DOES NOT FORESEE ENTRY FRENCH TROOPS. HE SAID SARKIS IS FAVORABLE TO SUMMIT OF KING KHALED, ASSAD, SADAT AND HIMSELF IN EARLY OCTOBER. AN NAHAR EXPECTS NO PROGRESS ON LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN OR SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN ISSUES BEFORE MEETING. SARKIS SCHEDULED MEET PIERRE GEMAYEL AND SPEAKER OF HOUSE KAMAL AL-ASSAD SEP 28. HASSAN SABRI KHOLI AND YOUAKIM MOUBARAK VERY ACTIVE SETTING UP MEETINGS BETWEEN SARKIS AND POLITICAL LEADERS IN WHAT L'ORIENT-LE JOUR SEES AS PREPARATION FOR DIALOGUE SESSIONS BETWEEN "LEBANESE FORCES" AND PALESTINIAN MILITANTS. KHOLI MET SEP 27 WITH ARAFAT AND MOUBARAK SAW RAYMOND EDDE TO DISCUSS TIME AND PLACE FOR MEETINGS WITH SARKIS. SAEB SALAM BELIEVES MUSEUM AREA TOO DANGEROUS AS MEETING SITE FOR SARKIS AND WEST BEIRUT LEADERS, SUGGEST INSTEAD OCCASIONAL MEETINGS WITH SARKIS AT CARLTON HOTEL IN WEST BEIRUT.

5. PEACE-KEEPING FORCES. LEFTIST RADIO LEBANON SAYS HASAN SABRI KHOLI AND PARLIAMENTARY VICE-PRESIDENT MOUNIR ABU FADEL SEP 27 EXAMINED POSSIBLE USE OF EUROPEAN FORCES IN LEBANON AND ALTERNATE POSSIBILITY OF ENLARGEMENT OF AL FORCE UP TO 25,000 MEN. SAME STATION EDITORIALIZED THAT IN VIEW GOOD FRENCH RELATIONS WITH ARAB STATES, FRENCH TROOPS WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE IF AL APPROVED. KHOLI SAID HE OPPOSES
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IDEA OF NON-ARAB PEACE FORCE, PREFERRING TO REINFORCE AL FORCE TO "A FORCE OF INTERVENTION." HE DENIED PIERRE GEMAYEL'S ACCUSATION AL FORCES HAVENQEEN PARTIAL. AL KIFAH AL ARABI SAYS KFOUR FRONT HAS DEMANDED FRENCH TROOPS TO CREATE "BALANCE" WITH SYRIAN AND ARAB PEACE FORCES. JOURNAL SAYS FRENCH AMBASSADOR HAS DISCUSSED IDEA WITH JUNBLATT, ARAFAT AND KHOLI, BUT ENCOUNTERED RESERVATIONS.

6. KATAEB CONGRESS. POLITICAL BUREAU OF KATAEB PARTY SEP 27 DECIDED TO CALL EXTRAORDINARY PARTY CONGRESS EARLY IN OCTOBER. AGENDA WILL FOCUS ON PALESTINIAN-LEBANESE DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION WITH NEW SARKIS REGIME.

7. JUNBLATT ATTACKED? Wafa and AFP say, Kamal Junblatt himself reportedly has confirmed, that ship (not Egyptian, as reported Sep 27) carrying him from Sidon to Cyprus attacked early Sep 27 while in international waters by Israel gunboat and later by Israeli helicopter. No one wounded, though boat damaged, and captain of Cypriot registry boat said formally protesting attack. Israelis deny attack. Junblatt now in Cairo where he met Sep 27 with FM Fahmi and is scheduled meet Sadat. He repeated demand for Syrian withdrawal. L'Orient-Le Jour reports Junblatt asked for "Arab political intervention in Lebanon guided by Egypt in order that Lebanon not be at the mercy of the Syrian army." In Beirut, following meeting of Nasserist leader Qulaylat and Palestinian rejectionist leadership, spokesman said two groups had identical views on current issues (presumably including refusal of unilateral withdrawal from mountains and insistence on Syrian withdrawal as part of any cease-fire).

8. Airport. An Nahar quotes Hasan Sabri Kholi that reopening of Beirut airport "facing some difficulties," despite continue presence of forces there. Kholi said from technical standpoint airport could reopen within 48 hours, but assurances needed that it will

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NOT BE SHELLED AND THAT IT BE OPEN TO ALL PARTIES.

9. French medicines arrive. Press reports 8.6 tons of medicines, gift of French government, turned over to Minister of Social Affairs Ghassan Tueni Sep 27 at Jounieh. Shipment of equal size said expected in Sidon within few days for use in Western Zone.

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
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